



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 693

January Session, 2005

Substitute House Bill No. 6949

House of Representatives, May 4, 2005

The Committee on Appropriations reported through REP. MERRILL of the 54th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL READINESS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 10-16p of the general
2 statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
3 (*Effective July 1, 2005*):

4 (a) As used in sections 10-16o to [10-16r] 10-16s, inclusive, as
5 amended by this act, 10-16u, 17b-749a, as amended by this act, and
6 17b-749c, as amended by this act:

7 (1) "School readiness program" means a nonsectarian program that
8 (A) meets the standards set by the department pursuant to subsection
9 (b) of this section and the requirements of section 10-16q, as amended
10 by this act, and (B) provides a developmentally appropriate learning
11 experience of not less than four hundred fifty hours and one hundred
12 eighty days for eligible children, except as provided in subsection (d)
13 of [said] section 10-16q;

14 (2) "Eligible children" means children three and four years of age
15 and children five years of age who are not eligible to enroll in school
16 pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible to enroll in school and
17 will attend a school readiness program pursuant to section 10-16t;

18 (3) "Priority school" means a school in which forty per cent or more
19 of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or
20 reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law and regulations,
21 excluding such a school located in a priority school district pursuant to
22 section 10-266p or in a former priority school district receiving a grant
23 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and, on and after July 1, 2001,
24 excluding such a school in a transitional school district receiving a
25 grant pursuant to section 10-16u;

26 (4) "Severe need school" means a school in a priority school district
27 pursuant to section 10-266p or in a former priority school district in
28 which forty per cent or more of the lunches served are served to
29 students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches;

30 (5) "Accredited" means accredited by the National Association for
31 the Education of Young Children, a Head Start on-site program review
32 instrument or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations,
33 or otherwise meeting such criteria as may be established by the
34 commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social
35 Services;

36 (6) "Year-round" means fifty weeks per year, except as provided in
37 subsection (d) of section 10-16q;

38 (7) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education; [and]

39 (8) "Department" means the Department of Education; and

40 (9) "Transition to school" means a planned system of collaboration
41 and communication among preschool and kindergarten teachers,
42 families and schools, developed by school principals in conjunction
43 with a local or regional school readiness council and kindergarten
44 teachers (A) to facilitate students' successful passage from school

45 readiness programs to kindergarten classes, and (B) to ensure that
46 social, cognitive and literacy gains that children make in school
47 readiness programs are sustained and expanded in kindergarten.

48 (b) The Department of Education shall be the lead agency for school
49 readiness. For purposes of this section and section 10-16u, school
50 readiness program providers eligible for funding from the Department
51 of Education shall include local and regional boards of education,
52 regional educational service centers, family resource centers and
53 providers of child day care centers, as defined in section 19a-77, Head
54 Start programs, preschool programs and other programs that meet
55 such standards established by the Commissioner of Education. The
56 department shall establish standards for school readiness programs.
57 The standards may include, but need not be limited to, guidelines for
58 staff-child interactions, curriculum content, including preliteracy
59 development, lesson plans, parent involvement, staff qualifications
60 and training, transition to school and administration. The department
61 shall develop age-appropriate developmental skills and goals for
62 children attending such programs. The commissioner, in consultation
63 with the Commissioners of Higher Education and Social Services and
64 other appropriate entities, shall develop a continuing education
65 training program for the staff of school readiness programs. For
66 purposes of this section, [on and after July 1, 2004] until June 30, 2012,
67 "staff qualifications" means there is in each classroom an individual
68 who has at least the following: (1) A credential issued by an
69 organization approved by the Commissioner of Education and nine
70 credits or more, and on and after July 1, 2005, twelve credits or more,
71 in early childhood education or child development from an institution
72 of higher education accredited by the Board of Governors of Higher
73 Education or regionally accredited; (2) an associate's degree with nine
74 credits or more, and on and after July 1, 2005, twelve credits or more,
75 in early childhood education or child development from such an
76 institution; (3) a four-year degree with nine credits or more, and on
77 and after July 1, 2005, twelve credits or more, in early childhood
78 education or child development from such an institution; or (4)
79 certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early

80 childhood education or special education, and on and after July 1,
81 2012, "staff qualifications" means each classroom is headed by a
82 teacher who has at least the following: (A) A bachelor's degree in early
83 childhood education or childhood development, or in a related field
84 approved by the Commissioner of Education; or (B) certification
85 pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood
86 education or special education.

87 Sec. 2. Section 10-16r of the general statutes is repealed and the
88 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2005*):

89 (a) A town seeking to apply for a grant pursuant to subsection (c) of
90 section 10-16p or section 10-16u shall convene a local school readiness
91 council or shall establish a regional school readiness council pursuant
92 to subsection (c) of this section. Any other town may convene such a
93 council. The chief elected official of the town or, in the case of a
94 regional school district, the chief elected officials of the towns in the
95 school district and the superintendent of schools for the school district
96 shall jointly appoint and convene such council. Each school readiness
97 council shall be composed of: (1) The chief elected official, or the
98 official's designee; (2) the superintendent of schools, or a management
99 level staff person as the superintendent's designee; (3) parents; (4)
100 representatives from local programs such as Head Start, family
101 resource centers, nonprofit and for-profit child day care centers, group
102 day care homes, prekindergarten and nursery schools, and family day
103 care home providers; [and] (5) a representative from a health care
104 provider in the community; and (6) other representatives from the
105 community who provide services to children. The chief elected official
106 shall designate the chairperson of the school readiness council.

107 (b) The local school readiness council shall: (1) Make
108 recommendations to the chief elected official and the superintendent of
109 schools on issues relating to school readiness, including any
110 applications for grants pursuant to sections 10-16p, as amended by this
111 act, 10-16u, 17b-749a, as amended by this act, and 17b-749c, as
112 amended by this act; (2) foster partnerships among providers of school

113 readiness programs; (3) assist in the identification of (A) the need for
114 school readiness programs and the number of children not being
115 served by such a program, [and] (B) health, safety and learning needs
116 for children from birth to five years of age, and available services to
117 meet those needs, and (C) for priority school districts pursuant to
118 section 10-266p, the number of children not being served by such a
119 program and the estimated operating cost of providing universal
120 school readiness to eligible children in such districts who are not being
121 served; (4) submit biannual reports to the Department of Education on
122 the number and location of school readiness spaces, estimates of future
123 needs, and the factors identified pursuant to subdivision (3) of this
124 subsection; (5) cooperate with the department in any program
125 evaluation and, on and after July 1, 2000, use measures developed
126 pursuant to section 10-16s for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness
127 of school readiness programs; (6) identify existing and prospective
128 resources and services available to children and families; (7) facilitate
129 the coordination of the delivery of services to children and families,
130 including (A) referral procedures, and (B) before and after-school child
131 care for children attending kindergarten programs; (8) exchange
132 information with other councils, the community and organizations
133 serving the needs of children and families; (9) make recommendations
134 to school officials concerning transition from school readiness
135 programs to kindergarten; [and] (10) encourage public participation;
136 and (11) communicate all recommendations and decisions made
137 pursuant to this section to the local or regional board of education and
138 the municipal legislative body.

139 (c) Two or more towns or school districts and appropriate
140 representatives of groups or entities interested in early childhood
141 education in a region may establish a regional school readiness
142 council. If a priority school is located in at least one of such school
143 districts, the regional school readiness council may apply for a grant
144 pursuant to subsection (d) of section 10-16p. The regional school
145 readiness council may perform the duties outlined in subdivisions (2)
146 to [(10)] (12), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section.

147 Sec. 3. Section 10-16s of the general statutes is repealed and the
148 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2005*):

149 (a) The Commissioners of Education and Social Services shall
150 develop an agreement with the Early Childhood Education Cabinet to
151 define the duties and responsibilities of their departments concerning
152 school readiness programs. The commissioners shall consult with
153 other affected state agencies. The agreement shall include, but not be
154 limited to, a multiyear interagency agreement to establish and
155 implement an integrated school readiness plan. Functions to be
156 described and responsibilities to be undertaken by the two
157 departments shall be delineated in the agreement.

158 (b) There shall be an Early Childhood Education Cabinet to
159 maximize good outcomes for children from birth to five years of age,
160 inclusive, in health, safety and learning. The cabinet shall consist of the
161 Governor, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, the
162 Commissioners of Education, Social Services, Higher Education, Public
163 Health, Children and Families and Mental Retardation, the
164 cochairpersons of each of the joint standing committees of the General
165 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and
166 human services and the select committee having cognizance of matters
167 relating to children, the executive directors of the Children's Trust
168 Fund, the Commission on Children, the Connecticut Health and
169 Educational Facilities Authority and the Office of Workforce
170 Competitiveness, or their designees, and three persons representing a
171 local or regional school readiness council appointed jointly by the
172 cochairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General
173 Assembly having cognizance of matters related to education. Of the
174 three school readiness council representatives, one shall represent a
175 council in a small priority school district, one shall represent a council
176 in a medium-sized priority school district and one shall represent a
177 council in a large priority school district. The cabinet shall be chaired
178 by the Governor or the Governor's designee.

179 [(b)] (c) On or before January 1, 2000, the commissioners shall adopt

180 assessment measures for use by school readiness programs in
181 conducting their annual evaluations pursuant to section 10-16q, as
182 amended by this act. The commissioners may adopt the assessment
183 measures used for Head Start programs.

184 (d) The Department of Education, within available appropriations,
185 shall be the lead agency for the conducting of a state-wide longitudinal
186 evaluation of the school readiness program, in consultation with the
187 Department of Social Services and the Early Childhood Education
188 Cabinet.

189 Sec. 4. Subsection (c) of section 17b-749a of the general statutes is
190 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
191 *1, 2005*):

192 (c) The Commissioners of Social Services and Education shall: (1)
193 Coordinate the development of a range of alternative programs to
194 meet the needs of all children, including children from birth to three
195 years of age, inclusive; (2) foster partnerships between school districts
196 and private organizations; (3) provide information and assistance to
197 parents in selecting an appropriate school readiness program; and (4)
198 work to ensure, to the extent possible, that school readiness programs
199 allow open enrollment for all children and allow families receiving
200 benefits for such a program to choose a public or accredited private
201 program.

202 Sec. 5. Subsection (c) of section 17b-749c of the general statutes is
203 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
204 *1, 2005*):

205 (c) The grants shall be used to:

206 (1) Help providers who are not accredited by the National
207 Association for the Education of Young Children to obtain such
208 accreditation;

209 (2) Help directors and administrators to obtain training;

210 (3) Provide comprehensive advice and services, such as enhanced
211 access to health care, a health consultant, a mental health consultant,
212 nutrition, family support services, parent education, literacy and
213 parental involvement, and community and home outreach programs;
214 and provide information concerning access when needed to a speech
215 and language therapist;

216 (4) Purchase educational equipment;

217 (5) Provide scholarships for [training to obtain a child development
218 associate certificate] career ladder advancement;

219 (6) Provide training for persons who are mentor teachers, as defined
220 in federal regulations for the Head Start program, and provide a
221 family service coordinator or a family service worker as such positions
222 are defined in such federal regulations;

223 (7) Repair fire, health and safety problems in existing facilities and
224 conduct minor remodeling to comply with the Americans with
225 Disabilities Act; train child care providers on injury and illness
226 prevention; and achieve compliance with national safety standards;

227 (8) Create a supportive network with family day care homes and
228 other providers of infant or toddler care;

229 (9) Provide for educational consultation and staff development;

230 (10) Provide for program quality assurance personnel;

231 (11) Provide technical assistance services to enable providers to
232 develop child care facilities pursuant to sections 17b-749g, 17b-749h
233 and 17b-749i, as amended by this act; [or]

234 (12) Establish a single point of entry system;

235 (13) Provide services that enhance the quality of programs to
236 maximize the health, safety and learning of children from birth to three
237 years of age, inclusive, including, but not limited to, those children
238 served by informal child care arrangements. Such grants may be used

239 for the improvement of staff to child ratios and interaction, initiatives
240 to promote staff retention, preliteracy development, parent
241 involvement, curriculum content and lesson plans; or

242 (14) Provide multidisciplinary training and intervention necessary
243 to assist preschool children, infants, toddlers and their families with
244 behavioral health difficulties to be continuously engaged in the
245 learning process and to avoid future school suspension.

246 Sec. 6. Subsection (c) of section 10a-194h of the general statutes is
247 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
248 *1, 2005*):

249 (c) Participating qualified nonprofit organizations may borrow
250 money from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities
251 Authority for any preschool project for which the authority is
252 authorized to make loans pursuant to this section. In connection with
253 such borrowing, participating qualified nonprofit organizations may
254 enter into any loan or other agreement and make such covenants,
255 representations and indemnities as such participating qualified
256 nonprofit organization deems necessary or desirable to obtain such
257 loans from the authority or to facilitate the issue of bonds by the
258 authority to finance such loans, including agreements with providers
259 of letters of credit, insurance or other credit facilities for such
260 financings. The Department of Education, in consultation with the
261 Department of Social Services and the Connecticut Health and
262 Educational Facilities Authority, shall establish priorities for financing
263 facilities based on need and quality determinants. Selection of child
264 care facilities for such financing shall be reviewed and approved by the
265 local or regional school readiness council before such financing is
266 approved.

267 Sec. 7. Subsection (e) of section 10-285a of the general statutes is
268 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
269 *1, 2005*):

270 (e) If an elementary school building project for a new building or for

271 the expansion of an existing building includes space for a school
272 readiness program, the percentage determined pursuant to this section
273 shall be increased by five percentage points, but shall not exceed one
274 hundred per cent, for the portion of the building used primarily for
275 such purpose. Recipient districts shall maintain full-day preschool
276 enrollment for at least ten years.

277 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2005*) (a) The Commissioner of
278 Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social Services,
279 shall, within available appropriations, develop and implement a plan
280 for the delivery of multidisciplinary consultation services for licensed
281 child care providers and school readiness programs. Such
282 multidisciplinary consultative system shall include the areas of
283 education, mental health and health, and shall serve settings including
284 community-based, public school-based and home-based providers.
285 The consultation shall include child-specific and program-level
286 services.

287 (b) The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the
288 Commissioner of Social Services, shall provide grants for health and
289 mental health consultation with an integrated or multidisciplinary
290 approach to assist local or regional school readiness councils in
291 providing such consultation to school readiness programs funded
292 pursuant to section 10-16p of the general statutes, as amended by this
293 act.

294 Sec. 9. Subsection (h) of section 10-285a of the general statutes is
295 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
296 *1, 2005*):

297 (h) Subject to the provisions of section 10-285d, if an elementary
298 school building project for a school in a priority school district or for a
299 priority school is necessary in order to offer a full-day kindergarten
300 program or to reduce class size pursuant to section 10-265f, the
301 percentage determined pursuant to this section shall be increased by
302 ten percentage points for the portion of the building used primarily for
303 such full-day kindergarten program or such reduced size classes, and

304 (1) in the case of a priority school, shall be increased by an additional
305 twenty percentage points, but shall not exceed ninety per cent in total,
306 for the portion of a building used primarily for such full-day
307 kindergarten program and a full-day preschool program, provided the
308 recipient district agrees to maintain both the full-day kindergarten and
309 full-day preschool programs in the school for at least ten years, and (2)
310 in the case of a priority school district, shall be increased by an
311 additional twenty percentage points, but shall not exceed ninety-five
312 per cent in total, for the portion of a building used primarily for such
313 full-day kindergarten program at a severe need school and a full-day
314 preschool program, provided the recipient district agrees to maintain
315 both the full-day kindergarten and full-day preschool programs in the
316 school for at least ten years.

317 Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2005*) Any entity receiving state
318 funds for early education shall follow student outcome measures and
319 program standards determined by the Department of Education, in
320 consultation with the Department of Social Services.

321 Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2005*) (a) There shall be a home
322 visitation program to promote wellness and school readiness, and to
323 prevent developmental delays, by assisting families in gaining access
324 to needed educational, social, medical and other services. The home
325 visitation program shall be administered by the Children's Trust Fund,
326 in consultation with the Departments of Education and Social Services.

327 (b) The home visitation program established pursuant to subsection
328 (a) of this section shall provide (1) case management services to
329 families with pregnant women or with children from birth to five years
330 of age who reside in priority school districts and who are eligible for
331 the Medicaid program, and (2) training of informal care providers
332 serving any such children during the first year of their care, within
333 available appropriations.

334 (c) Case management services provided to families pursuant to this
335 section shall include, but not be limited to, parent education, parenting
336 skills training, assistance in securing education, housing, employment

337 and social services, and other home visitation services.

338 (d) Training of informal care providers provided pursuant to this
 339 section shall include child development stages, safety, use of libraries,
 340 preliteracy, nutrition, food resources such as farmers' markets,
 341 program eligibility and access, or other related issues.

342 (e) Not later than July 1, 2005, the Department of Social Services, in
 343 consultation with the Children's Trust Fund and the Department of
 344 Education, shall submit to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
 345 Services an amendment to the state Medicaid plan required by Title
 346 XIX of the Social Security Act to provide for federal reimbursement of
 347 services provided pursuant to this section.

348 Sec. 12. Section 10-155e of the general statutes is repealed and the
 349 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2005*):

350 The Board of Governors of Higher Education, with the advice and
 351 assistance of the constituent units of the state system of higher
 352 education and such private institutions of higher education as elect to
 353 participate after notice thereof, shall develop programs for persons
 354 employed in the public schools and school readiness programs
 355 established pursuant to sections 10-16p to 10-16s, inclusive, as
 356 amended by this act, 10-16u and 17b-749a, as amended by this act, as
 357 paraprofessionals, to assist such paraprofessionals to fulfill state
 358 teacher certification requirements. [Said Board of Governors of Higher
 359 Education shall report its findings and recommendations to the joint
 360 standing committee on education of the General Assembly on or
 361 before February 1, 1974.]

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-16p(a) and (b)
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-16r
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-16s
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	17b-749a(c)
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	17b-749c(c)

Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10a-194h(c)
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-285a(e)
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-285a(h)
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>July 1, 2005</i>	10-155e

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

Changes were made to sections 9 and 11 for clarity.

ED *Joint Favorable Subst. C/R*

APP

APP *Joint Favorable Subst.-LCO*

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 06 \$	FY 07 \$
Education, Dept.	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below
Children's Tr. Fund, Council to Administer	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below
Social Services, Dept.	GF - Cost	See Below	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 06 \$	FY 07 \$
All Municipalities	Revenue Gain	See Below	See Below

Explanation

This bill results in costs to the State Department of Education and the Department of Social Services due to the requirements of section 8 regarding the development and implementation of a plan for multidisciplinary consultation services for child care and school readiness services. These costs have not been provided for within the budget as passed by the Appropriations Committee

Section 3 of the bill results in a cost to the state due to the creation of an Early Childhood Education cabinet. This cabinet has been provided with a budget of \$450,000 per year in the budget as passed by the Appropriations Committee.

Section 9 results in a potential significant cost to the state that in turn would be a revenue gain to local and regional school districts by providing bonus reimbursement to certain school construction projects. Exact costs would depend on the number of districts taking advantage of such a bonus that cannot be determined.

Section 11 establishes a home visitation program, to be administered by the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) Council in consultation with the Departments of Education (SDE) and Social Services (DSS). Establishing this program will result in a potentially significant cost to the Council to Administer the Children's Trust Fund.

The program must provide case management services to Medicaid eligible families with pregnant women or children from birth to five years of age residing in priority school districts. It must also provide training of informal care providers serving these same children during the first year of their care.

\$5.9 million has been included under the Council's budget within sHB 6671 (the FY 06-07 Appropriations Act, as favorably reported by the Appropriations Committee) to support Nurturing Families Network (NFN) programming in FY 06. An estimated 1,300 families will be served, some of whom do not reside in priority school districts. An estimated 6,500 - 7,000 Medicaid covered births occur each year in priority school district communities.

Resulting costs will depend upon the number of families who choose to enroll in the home visitation program, which cannot be determined in advance. For purposes of this analysis, however, it is assumed that fifty percent of eligible families will voluntarily accept services. Provision of an enhanced NFN program (including all home visitation services described in the bill) to this population would result in an estimated cost to the state of \$8.4 - \$9.5 million. The Council would also incur administrative costs of approximately \$280,000 to support five additional fiscal and program staff to oversee the program expansion.

The bill further requires the DSS to submit a State Medicaid Plan amendment to provide for federal reimbursement of the home visitation program services by July 1, 2005. The department will incur additional administrative expenses in the preparation and submission of this waiver. The expenses are expected to be minimal.

Requiring the home visitation program to be established within available appropriations will likely result in one of four outcomes: (1) the CTF Council will proceed with the development of the program, and will require a deficiency appropriation during FY 06; (2) the Council will delay the implementation of the program pending the approval of additional appropriations to meet this mandate in future fiscal years; (3) the Council will shift resources from other department priorities, thereby impacting existing programs; or (4) the Council will not implement the program.

OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6949

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL READINESS**SUMMARY:**

This bill establishes an Early Childhood Education Cabinet headed by the governor or her designee. The cabinet members also include commissioners of relevant state agencies, co-chairs of legislative committees and representatives of local school readiness councils. The cabinet oversees the departments of Education (SDE) and Social Services (DSS) in their administration of the state school readiness, day care, and other early childhood programs in order to maximize good health, safety, and learning outcomes for children up to age five.

The bill raises minimum qualifications for those heading school readiness classes starting July 1, 2012. It provides school construction grant bonuses for projects that encompass full-day pre-school and kindergarten programs at priority and severe-need schools and imposes an additional requirement for districts receiving an existing bonus for such projects.

The bill establishes a home visitation program to provide case management services to (1) Medicaid-eligible pregnant women and women with children up to age five who live in priority school districts and (2) informal child care providers. The program, which is to be administered by the Children's Trust Fund in consultation with SDE and DSS, must promote wellness and school readiness and prevent developmental delays by helping families to gain access to needed educational, social, medical, and other services.

The bill requires SDE, with DSS, to (1) develop and implement a plan to deliver a broad range of consultation services to school readiness programs and licensed child care providers and (2) provide grants to local school readiness councils to help them provide consultation services to school readiness programs.

The bill also:

1. defines “transition to school” and allows SDE to include guidelines for transition to school in its school readiness program guidelines;
2. expands the membership and duties of local school readiness councils;
3. expands the allowable uses for DSS’ quality enhancement grants for school readiness programs and daycare providers; and
4. establishes additional criteria for child care facility loans from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA).

Finally, the bill:

1. makes SDE, within available appropriations, the lead agency for a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the school readiness program in consultation with DSS and the Early Childhood Education Cabinet (§ 3);
2. specifies that the child care program alternatives whose development DSS and SDE must coordinate must meet the needs of children up to age three (§4);
3. requires entities receiving state funds for early education to follow student outcome measures and program standards developed by SDE in consultation with DSS (§ 10); and
4. expands an existing requirement for the higher education board of governors, in consultation with the state higher education constituent units and private colleges that wish to participate, to develop programs to help school paraprofessionals to become certified teachers to include school readiness paraprofessionals, and eliminates an obsolete reporting provision (§ 12).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2005

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CABINET (§ 3)

The bill establishes an Early Childhood Education Cabinet to maximize

good health, safety, and learning outcomes for children up to age five. It requires the education and DSS commissioners to make an agreement with the cabinet, instead of with each other as under current law, about their departments' duties and responsibilities for school readiness.

Under the bill, the cabinet members are:

1. the governor;
2. the Office of Policy and Management secretary;
3. the commissioners of education, social services, higher education, children and families, public health, and mental retardation;
4. the co-chairmen of the Education, Human Services, and Children's committees;
5. the executive directors of the Children's Trust Fund, Commission on Children, CHEFA, and the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, or their designees; and
6. three representatives of local school readiness councils appointed jointly by Education Committee co-chairs, who must represent councils from small, medium, and large-sized priority districts.

The governor or the governor's designee is the cabinet's chair. (The bill does not explicitly allow the governor to appoint a designee.)

SCHOOL READINESS STAFF QUALIFICATIONS (§ 1)

The bill raises minimum qualifications for heads of school readiness classrooms, beginning July 1, 2012.

Current law, which remains in effect through June 30, 2012, requires each school readiness classroom to have someone with at least the following qualifications:

1. a credential from an SDE-approved organization and nine credits (12 credits starting July 1, 2005) in early childhood

education or child development from an accredited higher education institution,

2. an associate's degree from an accredited institution with nine credits (12 credits starting July 1, 2005) in early childhood education or child development,
3. a four-year degree from an accredited institution with nine credits (12 credits starting July 1, 2005) in early childhood education or child development, or
4. a teaching certificate with an early childhood education or special education endorsement. (An endorsement indicates the grades or subjects a certified teacher is qualified to teach.)

As of July 1, 2012, the bill requires each school readiness classroom to be headed by a teacher with at least (1) a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field approved by SDE or (2) a teaching certificate with an early childhood or special education endorsement. The bill does not specifically require the bachelor's degree to be from an accredited institution.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANT BONUSES (§§ 7, 9)

The bill establishes a 20-point school construction grant bonus for projects in priority and severe need schools used primarily for a full-day kindergarten or full-day school readiness program. The maximum reimbursement is 90% for priority school projects and 95% reimbursement for severe-need school projects. A priority school is a needy school in a non-priority district. A severe-need school is a low-income school in a priority district. In order to receive the bonuses, eligible districts must agree to maintain the programs in the school for at least 10 years. The 20-point bonus is in addition to an existing 10-point bonus for priority school district construction projects primarily used for full-day kindergarten or to reduce class sizes in grades one to three.

The bill also requires school districts that receive an existing five-point school construction grant bonus for new or expanded space for a school readiness program to maintain full-day preschool enrollment for a minimum of 10 years after receiving the extra reimbursement.

The existing five-point bonus is available for projects for new or expanded elementary school buildings that include space for school readiness programs. The maximum reimbursement is 100%.

HOME VISITATION PROGRAM (§ 11)

The bill establishes a home visitation program to promote wellness and school readiness and prevent developmental delays by helping families to gain access to needed educational, social, medical, and other services. The Children's Trust Fund must administer the program, in consultation with SDE and DSS.

The bill requires:

1. the program to provide (a) case management services to pregnant women and women with children up to age five who live in priority districts and are eligible for Medicaid and, (b) within appropriations, training for informal child care providers serving such children during the first year of care;
2. the case management services to include at least parent education, parenting skills training, and help in securing education, housing, employment, and social services, and other home visitation services; and
3. training for informal care providers to include child development stages, safety, library use, preliteracy, nutrition, food resources such as farmers' markets, program eligibility and access, and other related issues.

By July 1, 2005, DSS, in consultation with the trust fund and SDE, must submit to the federal government an amendment to the state Medicaid plan to provide for federal reimbursement for these services. (The agency must submit the amendment by July 1, 2005 but this section of the bill does not take effect until that date.)

CONSULTATION SERVICES PROGRAM (§ 8)

The bill requires SDE, in consultation with DSS and within available appropriations, to develop and implement a plan to deliver child-specific and program-level multidisciplinary consultation services for licensed child care providers and school readiness programs. The

system must cover education, mental health, and health and must serve community-, public school-, and home-based providers.

It also requires SDE, in consultation with DSS, to provide grants for health and mental health consultation with an integrated or multidisciplinary approach that will help local or regional school readiness councils provide consultation to state-funded school readiness programs.

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL (§ 1)

The bill defines “transition to school” for purposes of the school readiness program as a planned collaboration and communication system among preschool and kindergarten teachers, families, and school. School principals, school readiness councils, and kindergarten teachers must develop the system. The system’s purpose is to (1) ease students’ successful passage from school readiness programs to kindergarten and (2) ensure gains from school readiness continue and increase in kindergarten.

The bill also allows SDE to include guidelines for transition to school in its school readiness program standards.

LOCAL SCHOOL READINESS COUNCILS (§ 2)

The bill:

1. adds a representative of a health care provider in the community to each school readiness council;
2. requires councils, in addition to their current duties, to assess the local health, safety, and learning needs for children to age five and available services to meet the needs; and
3. requires councils to communicate all recommendations and decisions to their local or regional boards of education and municipal legislative bodies.

By law, to receive a state school readiness grant, a town must convene a local school readiness council or establish a regional council with other towns. The council must include the local chief elected official and school superintendent, or their designees; parents; and local child

care providers, among others.

DSS QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANTS (§ 5)

The bill allows DSS' quality enhancement grants to school readiness program and daycare providers to be used for the following additional things:

1. providing comprehensive advice as well as services, including access to mental health consultants;
2. providing services to enhance the quality of programs for children age three and under, including informal child care arrangements; and
3. providing multidisciplinary training and intervention to help preschool children with behavioral health difficulties and their families to be continuously engaged in the learning process and avoid future school suspension.

Allowable quality improvements for programs for children age three and under include improving staff-to-child ratios and interaction, staff retention initiatives, parent involvement, curriculum content, preliteracy development, and lesson plans.

The bill also allows grants to be used for any type of staff career ladder advancement, not just training to obtain a child development associate certificate. It expands use of grants for supportive networks with family day care homes to include all providers of care for infants or toddlers.

CHEFA CHILD CARE FACILITIES PROGRAM (§ 6)

By law, CHEFA may issue bonds to fund loans to municipalities, local and regional school boards, regional educational service centers, and other participating qualified nonprofit organizations to enable them to acquire, build, improve, expand, furnish, or equip facilities for providing educational programs for three- and four-year-olds.

This bill requires SDE, with DSS and CHEFA, to set financing priorities based on need and quality, and requires each facility's local school readiness council to review and approve its selection for financing.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference

Yea 23 Nay 1

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Report

Yea 48 Nay 1